



No Child Left Behind – The Law That Ushered in a New Era

The *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (*No Child Left Behind*) is a landmark in education reform designed to improve student achievement and change the culture of America's schools. President George W. Bush describes this law as the "cornerstone of my administration." Clearly, our children are our future, and, as President Bush has expressed, "Too many of our neediest children are being left behind."

With passage of *No Child Left Behind*, Congress reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (*ESEA*)--the principal federal law affecting education from kindergarten through high school. In amending *ESEA*, the new law represents a sweeping overhaul of federal efforts to support elementary and secondary education in the United States. It is built on four common-sense pillars: accountability for results; an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research; expanded parental options; and expanded local control and flexibility.

What No Child Left Behind Does for Parents and Children

Supports learning in the early years, thereby preventing many learning difficulties that may arise later

Children who enter school with language skills and pre-reading skills (e.g., understanding that print reads from left to right and top to bottom) are more likely to learn to read well in the early grades and succeed in later years. In fact, research shows that most reading problems faced by adolescents and adults are the result of problems that could have been prevented through good instruction in their early childhood years (Snow, Burns and Griffin 1998). It is never too early to start building language skills by talking with and reading to children. *No Child Left Behind* targets resources for early childhood education so that all youngsters get the right start.

Provides more information for parents about their child's progress

Under *No Child Left Behind*, each state must measure every public school student's progress in reading and math in each of grades 3 through 8 and at least once during grades 10 through 12. By school year 2007-2008, assessments (or testing) in science will be underway. These assessments must be aligned with state academic content and achievement standards. They will provide parents with objective data on where their child stands academically.

Alerts parents to important information on the performance of their child's school

No Child Left Behind requires states and school districts to give parents easy-to-read, detailed report cards on schools and districts, telling them which ones are succeeding and why. Included in the report cards are student achievement data broken out by race, ethnicity, gender, English language proficiency, migrant status, disability status and low-income status; as well as important information about the professional qualifications of teachers. With these provisions, *No Child Left Behind* ensures that parents have important, timely information about the schools their children attend--whether they are performing well or not for *all* children, regardless of their background.

Gives children and parents a lifeline

In this new era of education, children will no longer be trapped in the dead end of low-performing schools. Under *No Child Left Behind*, such schools must use their federal funds to make needed improvements. In the event of a school's continued poor performance, parents have options to ensure that their children receive the high-quality education to which they are entitled. That might mean that children can transfer to higher-performing schools in the area or receive supplemental educational services in the community, such as tutoring, after-school programs or remedial classes.

Improves teaching and learning by providing better information to teachers and principals

Annual tests to measure children's progress provide teachers with independent information about each child's strengths and weaknesses. With this knowledge, teachers can craft lessons to make sure each student meets or exceeds the standards. In addition, principals can use the data to assess exactly how much progress each teacher's students have made and to better inform decisions about how to run their schools.

Ensures that teacher quality is a high priority

No Child Left Behind defines the qualifications needed by teachers and paraprofessionals who work on any facet of classroom instruction. It requires that states develop plans to achieve the goal that all teachers of core academic subjects be highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year. States must include in their plans annual, measurable objectives that each local school district* and school must meet in moving toward the goal; they must report on their progress in the annual report cards.

Gives more resources to schools

Today, more than \$7,000 on average is spent per pupil by local, state and federal taxpayers. States and local school districts are now receiving more federal funding than ever before for all programs under *No Child Left Behind*: \$23.7 billion, most of which will be used during the 2003-04 school year. This represents an increase of 59.8 percent from 2000 to 2003. A large portion of these funds is for grants under Title I of *ESEA*: Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged. Title I grants are awarded to states and local education agencies to help states and school districts improve the education of disadvantaged students; turn around low-performing schools; improve teacher quality; and increase choices for parents. For fiscal year (FY) 2003, funding for Title I alone is \$11.7 billion--an increase of 33 percent since the passage of *No Child Left Behind*. President Bush's FY 2004 budget request would increase spending on Title I by 48 percent since he took office.

Allows more flexibility

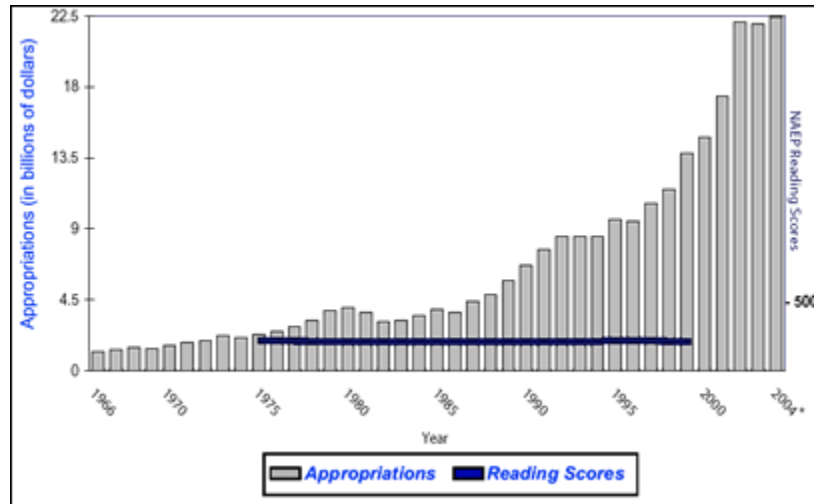
In exchange for the strong accountability, *No Child Left Behind* gives states and local education agencies more flexibility in the use of their federal education funding. As a result, principals and administrators spend less time filling out forms and dealing with federal red tape. They have more time to devote to students' needs. They have more freedom to implement innovations and allocate resources as policymakers at the state and local levels see fit, thereby giving local people a greater opportunity to affect decisions regarding their schools' programs.

Focuses on what works

No Child Left Behind puts a special emphasis on implementing educational programs and practices that have been clearly demonstrated to be effective through rigorous scientific research. Federal funding will be targeted to support such programs. For example, the Reading First program makes federal funds available to help reading teachers in the early grades strengthen old skills and gain new ones in instructional techniques that scientifically based research has shown to be effective.

Why No Child Left Behind Is Important to America

Federal Spending on K-12 Education under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and NAEP Reading Scores (Age 9)



Note: Appropriations for ESEA do not include funding for special education. Reading scores are the average scores for 9-year-olds, according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). A score of 200 implies an ability to understand, combine ideas and make inferences based on short, uncomplicated passages about specific or sequentially related information.

*Reflects the President's budget request for 2004.

Source: U.S. Department of Education Budget Service and NAEP 1999 Trends in Academic Progress.

Since the Elementary and Secondary Education Act first passed Congress in 1965, the federal government has spent more than \$242 billion through 2003 to help educate disadvantaged children. Yet, the achievement gap in this country between rich and poor and white and minority students remains wide. According to the most recent National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) on reading in 2000, only 32 percent of fourth-graders can read at a proficient level and thereby demonstrate solid academic achievement; and while scores for the highest-performing students have improved over time, those of America's lowest-performing students have declined (National Assessment of Educational Progress 2001). The good news is that some schools in cities and towns across the nation are creating high achievement for children with a history of low performance. If some schools can do it, then all schools should be able to do it.

United for Results

Because of No Child Left Behind:

Parents will know their children's strengths and weaknesses and how well schools are performing; they will have other options and resources for helping their children if their schools are chronically in need of improvement.

Teachers will have the training and resources they need for teaching effectively, using curricula that are grounded in scientifically based research; annual testing lets them know areas in which students need extra attention.

Principals will have information they need to strengthen their schools' weaknesses and to put into practice methods and strategies backed by sound, scientific research.

Superintendents will be able to see which of their schools and principals are doing the best job and which need help to improve.

School boards will be able to measure how their districts are doing and to measure their districts in relation to others across the state; they will have more and better information on which to base decisions about priorities in their districts.

Chief state school officers will know how the schools in their states and in other states are doing; they will be better able to pinpoint where guidance and resources are needed.

Governors will have a yearly report card on how their states' schools are doing; they will be able to highlight accomplishments of the best schools and target help to those schools that are in need of improvement.

Community leaders and volunteer groups will have information they can use to rally their members in efforts to help children and schools that need the most help.

*Note: For the purpose of discussion in this book, the terms "district" and "local education agency" are used interchangeably in discussing the agency at the local level responsible for maintaining administrative control of public elementary and secondary schools in a given area or political subdivision of the state.